

absence I was at once invited by his wife,
 and so sur-
 rounded by cultivation that a vacant space
 could only
 be found for the camp in a stubble-field.

The caravan had only just come in, and
 there was
 neither fuel nor drinking water within easy
 reach. I was
 so completely worn out that I was lifted off
 the horse and
 laid on the ground in blankets till the camp
 was in order
 late at night. Sharban, knowing that his
 deception was
 discovered, had disappeared with his *yabus*
 without helping
 as usual to pitch my tent. Mirza, always
 cheerful and
 hard-working, though always slow, and
 Johannes did
 their best, but it is very hard on servants
 who are up
 before five not to bring them in till sunset,
 when their
 work is scarcely over till near midnight, and
 has to be
 done in the dark. The next day there were a
 succession
 of dust storms and half a gale from noon to
 sunset, but my
 tent stood it well, and the following day this
 was repeated.
 These strong winds usually prevail in the
 afternoon at
 this season.

Urmi, October 8. — A march over low and
 much-
 ploughed hills, an easy descent and a ford
 brought us
 down upon the plain of Urmi, the "Paradise
 of Persia,"
 and to the pleasant and friendly hamlet of
 Turkman,
 where I spent the night and made the half-
 march into
 Urmi yesterday morning. This plain is truly "
 Paradise "
 as seen from the hill above it, nor can I
 say that its
 charm disappears on more intimate
 acquaintance. Far
 from it!

I have travelled now for nine months in
Persia and
know pretty well what to expect—not to
look for sur-
prises of beauty and luxuriance, and to be
satisfied
with occasional oases of cultivation among
brown, rocky,
treeless hills, varied by brown villages with
crops and
spindly poplars and willows, contrasting with
the harsh
barrenness of the surrounding gravelly
waste.